

ENCLOSURE TO BUREAU (1)

BU 100-428091

NY 100-134637

REPORT OF FORMER AGENT TURNER

William W. Turner interviewed by Elsa Knight Thompson and Trevor Thomas at  
PACIFICA RADIO STATION KPFA (FM), Berkeley, Calif.

October 1962

William W. Turner is a former FBI official whose services were terminated by that Bureau after ten and a half years. He responded by filing suit against the FBI in the United States District Court, Washington, D.C. on October 5, 1962. Mr. Turner had served in five different field offices as special agent, as an assistant supervisor and as an inspector's aide. He was engaged in nearly every branch of work done by this organization--espionage, security, applicant cases, crime, and sound, including wire tapping. He has just completed a book describing his experiences. Mr. Turner was educated at Canisius College and trained at FBI schools in Washington, D.C. and Quantico, Virginia. He served during the war in the United States Navy.

The following interview was conducted in KPFA's studios by Elsa Knight Thompson and Trevor Thomas, who asks the first question.

TREVOR THOMAS: Mr. Turner, Jack Levine has told our reporters in New York that you have been discharged from the Federal Bureau of Investigation for writing letters to Congressmen that were critical of the Internal Bureau operations. Is this the case, and can you tell us something about how this came about?

WILLIAM W. TURNER: This is the case. I was an agent in the FBI for ten and a half years at the time that I was dismissed.

ELSA KNIGHT THOMPSON: During that time, insofar as you are aware, you not only were an employee, but an accepted and satisfactory employee, could we clear that up right now?

TURNER: I think that we can. Yes, I think that my performance ratings will bear out the fact that I was considered an excellent employee during that time.

THOMAS: What was your, what do we call it, rate, or job description at the time that you left the Bureau?

TURNER: I was a special agent in a government grade, grade 12.

THOMPSON: Now you said that you were discharged for writing letters to Congressmen. I don't suppose that that was the only charge that the FBI mentioned in dismissing you, was it?

TURNER: There were four specific charges in support of seven pages of specifications. It was quite a bulky document.

THOMPSON: It included a lot of other things besides writing letters to Congressmen?

TURNER: Well, it included certain specific statements I had made in the letters to Congress, and this predominantly formed the basis. There were one or two other issues which came up, and these were later dismissed by the Civil Service Commis-

sion.

THOMPSON: How did it happen to go in front of the Civil Service Commission in the first place?

TURNER: Well, as you know, the FBI is not under Civil Service as far as matters of this type are concerned. However, being a veteran of World War II, the Veteran's Preference Act of 1944 is applicable to Bureau activities, and it states that in the event of suspension without pay for over 30 days or in the event of a dismissal that the Civil Service Commission then has authority to review the matter.

THOMPSON: Did they review it?

TURNER: Yes, they did.

THOMPSON: What was their determination?

TURNER: Their determination--I might add there was a hearing in Washington, D. C. and the hearing lasted approximately four days. There is a transcript of perhaps 800 pages of testimony by those present and in affidavit form by others who were not present, and as a result of the hearing two of the four charges of the Bureau were dismissed. There were 14 specifications. Nine were dismissed. Now of the 5 specifications which are left, all of them are based on statements that I made in private correspondence to members of Congress.

THOMAS: So that it was not the fact that you wrote the letter to a Congressman, but the fact that you said certain things about the Bureau.

TURNER: This is correct.

THOMAS: Now could you tell us what the four charges were?

TURNER: I would be able to do that. Number 1, the charge that I was not amenable to discipline. 2. The charge that I had a poor attitude towards the Director and the FBI based on statements that I had made in these letters to Congress. Also, they claimed that I was a security risk. Now by this, they later backtracked a little on this and claimed, well they didn't mean that I was disloyal to the government or anything, but I had made statements which they thought were irresponsible and therefore they didn't think I should be entrusted further with all the confidential information that an agent should have. The fourth charge that the Bureau used--what it was--that I had made statements which were either untrue or unjustified, not accurate, and what these referred to specifically, if I recall--one referred to about the morale of the agents being low. Well, of course this was made by reason of first hand knowledge on my part. I was part of the agent corps for almost eleven years. The Bureau refuted it with a statistic purporting to show a low turnover rate and some statements by Bureau officials that morale was high. This is an example of what was classified as an untruthful or inaccurate statement. Of course, the funny part about it all is that after ten years of being entirely truthful and entirely accurate, as soon as I made certain statements which were critical of the Bureau and certain of its policies, all of a sudden I lost this truthfulness and accuracy.

The timing on it is, I think, rather significant.

THOMPSON: Now are these four charges, are they the basis for the legal action in which you are involved at the moment?

TURNER: The basis for the legal action--of course as I said, two of the four were thrown out by the Civil Service Commission--the basis of the legal action is the remaining two, all of which are based on private correspondence to Congress, and the fact that such correspondence is recognized under the First Amendment to be privileged. I might explain that by saying that under the First Amendment any constituent or a government employee is permitted, in fact has the right, to communicate with Congress expressing a grievance or passing on information without redress, and this is even more specifically brought out in title 5 of the U.S. Code, Section 652 which specifically states the right of persons employed in the Civil Service of the United States, either individually or collectively to petition Congress or any member thereof, or to furnish information to either house of Congress or to any Committee or member thereof shall not be denied or interfered with. Well, obviously, we feel pretty strongly that the FBI should be no exception to this and that Congress is the legislative body which is responsible for how government agencies carry out their internal functions, operations and responsibilities. One of the channels which the founding fathers of this Republic opened up to ascertain or make sure that Congress did receive information as to the functioning of government agencies is this channel of communication between constituents and government employees, protected so that Congress can learn what is going on inside these agencies.

THOMAS: Mr. Turner, did the FBI, however, as a Bureau have any rule, an internal rule of any kind, that directed agents not to communicate with Congressmen on the basis of complaints or criticisms of the Bureau's operations?

TURNER: No. There was no such regulation.

THOMAS: So that, then, you did not violate even an internal regulation, irrespective of how this relates to---

TURNER: No, there is no argument on that at all.

THOMPSON: You have now filed a suit in the United States District Court of the District of Columbia and that suit is primarily for the purpose of having these charges dropped, and you wish to be reinstated as an FBI agent.

TURNER: That is correct. That is what the complaint is for.

THOMPSON: And that case has not been heard?

TURNER: No. It was filed on October 5, and the FBI has a certain period of time in which to respond to it.

THOMAS: Mr. Levine was of the opinion in the interviews that I mentioned to you a while ago with our New York reporters that it was not possible to criticize the

FBI while you were a member thereof, but as I get from you, you in fact were critical while you were a member.

TURNER: Yes, I poked the tiger from inside the cage, so to speak. There, of course, what Mr. Levine is referring to about prohibitions against internal criticism is of course an internal policy within the organization which has developed over the years and not any statutory regulation inside the organization.

THOMAS: I would like you, if you would, Mr. Turner, to tell us a little about your work as a sound man. You mentioned this, and you have also written a paper, I understand, about this, and perhaps you could talk about this for a few minutes.

TURNER: As you know, Mr. Thomas, it's a recognized fact that the FBI does have wire taps in existence. They are approved by the attorney general, and they are used as stated in appropriations testimony in cases involving internal security of the country; also in cases where a life may be in jeopardy, such as extortion or kidnapping cases where there is a victim in the hands of the criminal. In these cases where these wire taps are in, and Mr. Hoover always in his appropriations testimony mentions the specific number that are in throughout the country at any one time, of course it takes technically qualified and trained people to install and maintain them and this is one of the duties which I had as a special agent.

THOMPSON: How do you go about doing that?

TURNER: Well, as far as the wire tap is concerned, there is a very comprehensive volume available on it called, "The Eavesdroppers," published by an attorney in Philadelphia, and I don't suspect that the way we do it is much different from the way any police department or anyone else would do it. Wire taps are a question of bridging a pair of wires which belong to the telephone subscriber and then linking them up with your own wire and listening in so that it is a fairly simple and straightforward technical problem.

THOMPSON: Is it usually done with the cooperation of the telephone company, or can they be completely ignored in the process?

TURNER: It can be done either way. Of course it's easier with the telephone company cooperation, but, it could be done without it.

THOMAS: And of course there are many other more sophisticated ways of eavesdropping than wiretapping.

TURNER: Well, this is true. Wiretapping is actually --

THOMPSON: Pretty archaic by now.

TURNER: Not archaic, but it's a narrower application of broad eavesdropping situations which could encompass anything from listening through a keyhole to, I guess they call them on the detective thrillers, bugs, and this kind of thing.

THOMAS: How are the wiretapping activities of the FBI controlled. Does each tap



have to be approved by Washington, or do you as an agent instigate a tap on a suspect, either a criminal suspect or someone you are surveilling as a possible kidnapper or a security risk? What happens?

TURNER: Well, they are approved by Washington.

THOMAS: All taps are approved by Washington?

TURNER: Yes, right.

THOMPSON: Before you institute them, or afterwards? Would you wait? Because there seems to be some contradiction here between--

TURNER: Well, it could be a question of picking up the phone if there was a drastic time element involved.

THOMPSON: But you would wait for an o.k.?

TURNER: Yes, right.

THOMAS: And so, that then in effect Mr. Hoover's report on the number of taps that exist at any given time is in your opinion quite accurate.

TURNER: I would say it's fairly accurate, speaking from my own--I haven't been in every office in every part of the country under all conditions, but from my own experience it's accurate.

THOMPSON: Well, in our previous conversation I was very interested in some of what you had to say about the criminal investigation--things like breaking seals on a railway car, in other words, the jurisdiction as between the FBI and the local authorities.

TURNER: Yes. What was your specific point there?

THOMPSON: Well, you seem to feel that it was, well not exactly a waste of time, perhaps, but that many of these things didn't properly belong in this area.

THOMAS: I think, the point that you made relative to this was vis-a-vis the Bureau's record against large organized crime.

THOMPSON: The whole criminal side of the FBI.

TURNER: Right. I think that one of the things that does frustrate the agents quite a bit is the fact that they haven't been given free rein to go against the top hoodlums and the big boys in crime. It's been more a less a situation where their efforts are channelled into accumulating quantitatively a large number of statistics, while obviously when you get into a situation like this your approach isn't always objective. You're out there to get a conviction and it's obviously much easier to get one of some alcoholic that breaks the seal on a railway car, who after all is more or less a local problem, a skid row inhabitant, or perhaps some indigent car thief that wanders

across a state line and you have the technicality there of arresting him just because he wandered across the state line which may be no more than a couple of miles away. These people usually can't afford attorneys when they're caught. They usually figure, well, the FBI's got me, and they invariably plead guilty--with few exceptions.

THOMAS: But, Mr. Turner, aren't you citing in these two instances, the exception. It seems to me that you might be giving a slightly distorted picture of the activities of the Bureau in working on criminal cases.

TURNER: I'm not entirely citing exceptions. No, I would say that a large portion of the totals which are presented as conviction statistics, that a very significant portion of them amount to more than misdemeanor offenses, not felonies.

THOMAS: But because of the nature of the act, for instance your example of the box car seal, because this is interstate commerce it then becomes a Federal case.

TURNER: Right. Whereas the problem, other than the Federal technicality, is strictly local. I think the distinction I drew there was that people in organized crime, obviously controlling millions of dollars and having batteries of high-priced attorneys are a little different group to try and hit from a law enforcement standpoint and make it stick. And I think also from a Federal standpoint that these are the people that pose the biggest menace to this country and the safety and well-being of the citizens.

THOMPSON: Well, is this purely a matter of statistics? You've inferred, it seems to me, two reasons for this situation which you describe. One is that sixty convictions for some minor infringement is a large total of whatever the total may be, where the other would take much longer and wouldn't add up statistically in the same way. Is there --and then you also inferred, it seems to me, a moment ago, that perhaps they might be loathe to take on the big crime syndicates. Why do you feel that this happens? Surely they have all the propaganda facilities at their disposal. Wouldn't catching a really big crime syndicate do as much for the FBI's reputation as catching up with sixty car thieves?

TURNER: Obviously it would, but--if it could be done--but, I think it comes down to the question of one in the hand is worth two in the bush. As I pointed out, these loners in crime--these one-man gangs are a lot easier to catch. In a lot of instances the local police have already caught them and it's pretty clear cut, whereas when you get into organized crime, you're talking about a very complex situation which would require intensive effort and large expenditures of manpower, all of which, when you finally wind it up, may come to naught because these people have had the money to purchase, or to retain top legal authority. If you did get a statistic on one of them it would only be one. It would count no more than some skid row wino as far as a conviction statistic is concerned.

THOMAS: Why are conviction statistics per se so important to the Bureau?

TURNER: Well, they've been used in justifying the Bureau's appropriation to the appropriations committee in Congress. As you know, each government agency goes--

the head of it will go before the appropriation committee and request a budget and thereby what they term accomplishments in justification of this continued expenditure of the taxpayers money.

THOMPSON: Do they label the different sections? Do they say sixty second-hand stolen cars received, or is it just a total as a result of FBI work and prosecution of cases--we have convicted so many people?

TURNER: Well, sometimes--well, in the matter of cars they do specifically state how many cars they recovered. I've got to qualify that again. They don't state that they recovered. They state "that were recovered in FBI-investigated cases." The reason for this qualification is that in many instances, and in my experience in most instances, the FBI itself never physically recovers the automobile. It's recovered by a local officer or a local agency, and then this agency will notify the FBI that the car came from out of state and the Bureau will then get in on the investigation. But they still will claim this car as money saved, recovered for the taxpayer. Sometimes the Bureau agent may never ever have seen the car.

THOMAS: I would like to know, Mr. Turner. You have worked in five different Bureau offices in various parts of the United States, and I would like to know some of the kinds of cases that you have been involved in, because I am still not satisfied that we are getting as accurate a description of the Bureau's activities as we might here. Now, we've mentioned such things as the car thefts and relatively minor things, and we've talked about the big operations such as that famous Appalachian collective that occurred in New York state which I really don't know whatever happened on that, but what are some of the cases that you as an agent would be assigned to beyond this?

TURNER: Predominantly in criminal work I would say that my experience has been in theft from interstate shipment. For example, interstate of stolen motor vehicles, theft of government property, crime on a government reservation, things of that nature rather than the larger--what we call crimes which would be involved with organized crime, although I have worked on kidnapping cases and major criminal investigations, bank robberies, extortion, things of that nature.

THOMAS: All right, on those three areas--kidnapping, bank robbery and extortion--what is your opinion of the FBI's efficiency as a law enforcement agency here?

TURNER: I think that they do rather well in these particular types of investigations. I don't want to say that they couldn't do better, but I find one thing that is important in these types of investigations, and which they have at their disposal are large quantities of manpower which they can throw into the breach and really saturate an area. Now, in many types of investigations this is desirable and they have it and I found that this, probably, rather than any super sleuthing or masterminding is the reason that these cases many times come to a successful conclusion.

THOMAS: Mr. Levine said that it was his estimate that there were approximately fifteen hundred FBI agents in the Communist Party, which would come out to something like a ratio of one agent for every 5.7 members of the Communist Party. Does



this match with your opinion or information?

TURNER: Well, I wouldn't want to even try and numerically judge that. I have no-- perhaps Mr. Levine had a better source or a way of doing it. My experience has been, and it's again very limited from a-- strictly localized--that the Communist Party has been fairly well penetrated by the Bureau informants, which is what Mr. Levine undoubtedly was referring to, as opposed to special agents which are actually Bureau employees, he was referring to informants like, we've all heard of Herbert Philbrick and Matts ~~Vedick~~ <sup>Curtis</sup> in Pittsburgh, this kind of thing.

THOMPSON: And these are people who are not full fledged special agents, but simply people that the FBI uses as spies?

TURNER: Well, again, I wouldn't use the word spies. They're informants. They're not special agents. They're not employees. They may be furnished funds to carry on their penetration of the Communist Party or any other subversive organization, but they're not special agents of the FBI. No.

THOMPSON: And, have you had any work within the Communist Party or in dealing with this aspect of the FBI work?

TURNER: I've had limited experience in it, yes.

THOMPSON: Well, how, I would be very interested to know -- we hear a great deal about Communist Front organizations, and he used the example of knowing that a certain person was in the Communist Party and therefore when he became affiliated with some other organization, keeping watch on that organization. What sort of criteria do you use? How do you determine whether or not an idea or a person is subversive? Are you trained in any particular way for that kind of work?

TURNER: If I recall Mr. Levin's comment on that, the FBI doesn't evaluate who is subversive and who isn't. These particular reports, I think, that you are talking about might refer to somebody that wanted to take a job with a government organization. Well, the FBI merely furnishes the interested government agency with their report on the matter and doesn't come to conclusions. I might explain that these organizations that are on the attorney general's list--what they will do--will determine the extent of a person's participation in the activities or in the policy making level of such groups, and perhaps those that don't appear on the attorney general's list they will prepare a thumbnail sketch or a characterization of just what this organization is, but as far as evaluating the person, no.

THOMAS: Mr. Turner, if you are--let's take a specific case--I've applied for a job, for example, with xyz agency, and this has some security aspect to it, and you, as an agent might be assigned to check my 42 references, or whatever number are required. What are some of the questions, if this is proper and ethical for you to talk about, what are some of the questions that you would use to gather the information for the agency to make the determination?

THOMPSON: Yes, what's your criterion when you go out to find out whether a person is a security risk?

TURNER: Again, of course I don't go out to find out whether they are a security risk. The agent is supposed to go out and find out, Number 1. The person's character, his loyalty to the country--

THOMPSON: And how do you determine that?

TURNER: Again, participation in any of these, and again the extent of the participation in any of these organizations on the attorney general's list. Well, all right, that's one facet to explore. Another is particular associates of the subject. Maybe he doesn't have a particular past association, but maybe he associates with many people who are members of these organizations which are subversive. There are many ways of doing--what it amounts to in the end is a thorough investigation of the person's activities, associations, and his thoughts with regard to whether he is--well, take an example, you might ask a question, in the event of war, would his sympathies lie with this country or with some foreign power.

THOMAS: Now is --what I'm trying to find out, Mr. Turner, is whether there are areas, such as character, loyalty to one's country, and a number of other areas that you as an agent would discuss with a person of whom you were asking these questions, or whether there are predescribed questions that you have to find out the specific answers to.

TURNER: No, there are no predescribed questions.

THOMAS: I see. So that then the agent himself has to use a great deal of discretion and judgment in weighing the answers of the person he is interrogating?

TURNER: Well, yes.

THOMAS: It takes a tremendous amount of sophistication, then, I would imagine.

TURNER: Well, I would certainly think so, yes.

THOMPSON: Yes, well, that was a part of my earlier question--how are you trained in the FBI so that you have determined in your own mind what questions would establish the loyalty of an individual. Mr. Levine used specifically the example of knowing that a Communist had affiliated himself with a specific organization which might not even be on the attorney general's list as far as I gather. Now does that mean that immediately somebody would be monitoring the meetings of this organization and checking up on the other officers to see how many times they associated with this man socially? How would you go about it so that you find out that John Doe has become president of some committee or organization? Where do you go from there?

TURNER: Well, I think that Mr. Levine mentioned that the organizations with which the Bureau is most concerned are pretty well penetrated by these informants who attend the meetings and I think you will find this has pretty well been told in all--recounted in all the stories, books on the subject and all. I can recall reading one where it actually got to be more or less a laughing matter as to who was an FBI

informant and who was a bona fide member of the Communist Party. I think it reached perhaps a rather ludicrous stage, but, as far as the Communist Party is concerned, why the Bureau probably has it pretty well penetrated.

THOMPSON: Would it be too much to ask to say what kind of a question would you ask an individual if you were going to try to determine whether or not they were a subversive person? Where would you begin? Supposing you were interrogating me to find out whether or not I was a loyal citizen? What would you ask me?

TURNER: Well, in the first--I don't quite get the context of what you're asking.

THOMPSON: Well, we're still on this business of how does the agent, faced with the proposition of trying to find out whether an individual or a group of individuals who have organized themselves into something called xyz, is in fact a disloyal organization. What criteria are you using in your own mind? I mean, are you trained Marxists? Do you know when you hear them talk whether or not they're Marxists? Or is it a purely political judgment? What do you go on?

TURNER: Well, of course the judgment there again has already been made in the Department of Justice as to what organizations, so largely it's a question of determining relationships with these organizations and extent of participation.

THOMPSON: I see. In other words it would be membership and participation rather than any detailed knowledge of what that person thought about a specific issue, socialized medicine or whatever?

TURNER: Largely that's what it comes down to.

THOMPSON: One hears the statement made that if a person is suspected, or something like that, of something, that they are framed. Did you ever have anything to do with, or know anything about an incident which you could classify as a frame-up against a person who was suspected of something?

TURNER: Frame-up is sort of a --I guess that's a detective story kind of phrase. Of course, it is my contention that -- I don't know whether I would call it a frame-up or not, but that this action against me in Oklahoma City was bottomed on error. That's a legal term for it, which is somewhat similar to the frame-up. As far as frame-ups are concerned, in your general statement, no, I read one article by Edward Bennett Williams in the Saturday Evening Post which indicates that the Bureau suppressed evidence in a kidnapping case, but, that's about the extent of what I know on that.

THOMAS: But you have no personal knowledge of any such other than your own case?

TURNER: Right.

THOMPSON: But, in a sense, a lot of the information in the FBI files is being suppressed in the sense it is certainly not being released to anybody including the Justice Department. You talked about suppressing evidence--

TURNER: I don't know whether I quite get what you're driving at there.

THOMPSON: Well, it's a different aspect of it, but you did mention earlier that it was legitimate that some of the FBI files were never opened to anyone. Well, now what do the FBI propose to do with them if they're never open to anyone, if even the Justice Department is not given this information? Who's going to make the determination what happens to the people who are on those files? Perhaps I'm getting back to the question that Mr. Levine answered about the picking up of people inside of a few hours. All those people are going to be picked up without having had the slightest chance to defend themselves, to discuss whether or not the information was justified, without trial, without the Justice Department having had anything to do with it. That might form the basis for considerable injustice.

TURNER: No, I think you're wrong there in one statement. The Justice Department is fully aware of the identity of these people as far as I know.

THOMPSON: But they don't have the files, as I understand it.

TURNER: Well, I don't know, but I'm not sure that they don't.

THOMPSON: You don't know whether they have the files or not?

TURNER: I don't know whether they do or not, but I am practically certain that the Justice Department knows the identity of these people.

THOMPSON: Yes, well, knowing the identity, you know, if a person had been identified as a murderer, and was then picked up and put in a prison because they were a murderer without evidence ever having been produced or a trial being held, knowing the identity and being the murderer might--you know--there would be a big cleavage there.

TURNER: Well, yeah, I see ---

THOMPSON: In other words these people and organizations on whom the FBI has files which the Justice Department may or may not be aware of the contents, if they are not aware and all they have is the identification of a person as being a subversive--

TURNER: Well, as I told you, I don't know whether they do or they don't. The Justice Department, I would guess, has a complete file or copies of all reports, I would guess.

THOMPSON: But still those people, if what Mr. Levine said is correct, those people would still be liable to arrest without trial, and incarceration in the event of--

TURNER: Yeah, this probably would be the same thing as happened to a number of German and Japanese aliens or sympathisers after the commencement--after Pearl Harbor.

THOMAS: And of course it was, as we know now, the vast majority of these people

were not, but there was a dragnet.

TURNER: Yeah, yeah, this of course is--things that originate, I would guess, on a Presidential level so it hardly would be anything that--I think what you mean is the FBI just on their own initiative going out and doing this. No, I don't think so.

THOMPSON: No. But the --whatever government agency acted, would be acting on the basis purely and simply of the information collected by the FBI, which puts a great weight of responsibility on the agent.

TURNER: This is true, but this is true in any other facet of--the same in criminal cases, the same in anything.

THOMPSON: Oh, no. In criminal cases they are tried in front of a court.

TURNER: Yes. But again, a lot of the evidence is collected by uh, by uh--

THOMPSON: Yes, but it has to be subjected to some kind of scrutiny.

TURNER: I agree, all right, yeah. I see what you are talking about, but I think that that is not something that the FBI has initiated on their own. That's a Presidential decision as to certain persons. Now, it's probably a decision of the Department of Justice as to who specifically is put on these lists, perhaps with recommendations by the Bureau. I don't know. I'm not going to say, one way or another when I don't specifically know.

THOMPSON: No. Of course not.

THOMAS: I'd like to ask you about another aspect, Mr. Turner. In several places Mr. Levine talked about what he considered to be bias among some of the supervisors and in various sections of the Federal Bureau of Investigation. He talked about such things as a strong influence of Southern politicians--right wing, in his words, people politically, some of whom were critical, for instance, of Adlai Stevenson, in a particular lecture that he mentioned. He also said that in some cases there was anti-Negro bias, and in another case it was his opinion that there was some anti-semitic feelings. Now, I wonder, do you have any basis for commenting on this? I know this is an imprecise kind of thing and rather broad gauged, but I would like your opinion on these areas.

TURNER: Well, as far as the politics are concerned, during my career, I was more or less a-political as far as it's concerned. Now there is no question about the fact that the Bureau is extremely, oh, I don't know the correct word to use for this, but perhaps if you had to put it in a political term, they would be right-wing--oh, patriotism, this kind of thing being a very predominant issue. Well, I kind of think that under this--carried to extremes, and I feel that it's been carried to extremes by the Bureau, that sometimes individual rights get trod on, and that always is the end of patriotism promoted by this. I would say that, sure, if it came down to the rights of the government over the rights of the individual to the good of the society or to the good of the nation, I say, well fine. But I find that a lot of

times this treading on individuals and individual's rights merely serves the purposes, selfish purposes of individuals rather than the ends of patriotism or of the--promote the ends of government as such or serve the welfare of society. It's merely a self-seeking kind of thing rather than anything really necessary to promote desirable ends.

THOMPSON: In other words you don't feel unpatriotic because you are critical of the FBI?

TURNER: Heavens, no. I feel exactly the opposite, as a matter of fact, I just feel that I'm doing a patriotic thing by trying to criticize certain points which I feel definitely need criticism.

THOMPSON: What about the racial issues that Trevor was mentioning?

THOMAS: May I clarify this, because there was, as you mentioned when we were talking out there, an article in Ebony magazine written by a reporter for the magazine, an interview with Mr. Hoover, which in fact was quite laudatory, as I understand it, of the FBI's policy vis-a-vis hiring Negro-American, and yet Mr. Levine gave us somewhat of a different opinion on this. Do you have any information you could throw any light on this?

TURNER: I stated that I was rather a-political during my Bureau career--

THOMAS: No, well this really isn't a political question.

TURNER: Right, and I'm going to draw a parallel that I also would -- didn't pay too much attention to counting numbers on this kind of thing. I can only say this, that during the time I was in the Bureau that --I was in five different field offices over ten and a half years--I never personally knew another agent who was either Negro or Jewish. Now, what this may manifest is anybody's guess. Certainly there were certain individual agents who had certain prejudices. So far as I know this is strictly on an individual basis. I never heard any policy, but again--

THOMAS: Well, with six thousand agents that would be inevitable.

TURNER: Yes, right, it certainly would. I can't help but feel, however, that the fact that I never did run into any, even on my trips back to Washington, D.C., where I met agents in training classes, in retraining classes from all over the country, it just seemed that by chance I should have run into a couple if actually there was any significant percentage of either Negro or Jewish agents in the Bureau.

THOMPSON: No political education as such--you said you were fairly a-political, well, now for many people the FBI is a fairly political matter itself. Would you say that in the training of the men that it's put more on the level of "this is for the national good, this is for the national security," and that ideas like racism and political theory and things of this sort are not really stressed very much in training the men or in working with the men?

TURNER: Well, that's right, I mean, actually they are more or less peripheral to



the direct problem of law enforcement, and I don't think to any great extent they just got immersed in that particular topic or topics strictly because the time was mostly taken up with things about how to solve cases or take tire marks out of the ground, this kind of--you know--picking up evidence and rules of evidence and matters directly related to law enforcement as such.

THOMAS: Mr. Hoover has made a number of pronouncements, written a number of books having to do with the moral and some times the political posture of what he considers to be good citizenship and patriotism, and I wonder if in your experience this reflects down into the Bureau. Obviously he as a citizen has a perfect right to do this whether or not one agrees or disagrees, but I wonder, because he has some obviously very firm convictions, and I wonder how this channels down into the Bureau.

TURNER: Right. Yes, he does have some very firm convictions, and they permeate the Bureau. There's no deviation from them at all.

THOMPSON: You mean apart from what you wear, and this sort of thing, the more general ones.

TURNER: Right. Now, on these books that he's written, obviously I think that, perhaps to give an illustration might--the Bureau of Narcotics had a gentlemen who was its Director for thirty years, Dr. Anslinger. Now, this, too, is a long tenure for a bureaucrat in Washington, and I've read reports in the paper where the Kennedy administration was anxious to, as discretely as possible, get Mr. Anslinger to retire because they felt that he was too unyielding, inflexible in his viewpoints, that he imposed his viewpoints on anybody and everybody and that he had a tendency to consider the act rather than the actor, in other words in narcotics rather than considering that a person who uses narcotics, and of course I'm distinguishing from a person who peddles it, this is something else again, a person who is afflicted with the use of narcotics might actually be somebody who is sick, in need of treatment, rather than being somebody that should be thrown into jail as a criminal. I would say that if you draw this same parallel of the FBI it fits in pretty exactly with Mr. Hoover's viewpoint. Very inflexible on issues like that, and I think he has a tendency to consider the act rather than the actor in these situations. If you read his books, this strain does run through them. There is no question about it.

THOMAS: How does this reflect --you obviously were dissatisfied with some of the practices of the FBI. These may be many and I hope you can tell us something specifically about these. Mr. Levine also is, and he maintains that there are many agents who are dissatisfied, and he even used the word disillusioned. Would you care to comment on this?

TURNER: Well, yes. This was my prime concern in writing to members of Congress. One of the statements that I made was that the situation has become such in the Bureau that the morale of the special agents themselves is at an all-time low, and this I largely attributed to the abuse of personnel policies of the Bureau. And this is on record. It's in my letters to the members of Congress and its in the

Civil Service records, so I've been very specific on that particularly issue.

**THOMAS:** What are some of these?

**TURNER:** The first --I'll generalize a little bit, that the Bureau has--there's no use kidding ourselves about it--it's a vast bureaucracy, that's what it is. Now, usually in bureaucratic situations any employee of a bureaucracy has recourse to the Civil --or has use of some other forum to hear his complaints should he feel he is being unjustly or wrongly disciplined by his organization. In the case of the Bureau, however, this is entirely untrue, and many injustices have occurred to agents, and because of this tremendous prestige and image, the normal channels of grievance have broken down. I had a member of Congress tell me that he'd like to help, but there really wasn't much he could do, that Hoover was more powerful than the President, and long ago had been awarded sweeping powers which, right now there isn't a thing they could do about. One of the things that I think has been brought in the hearing testimony, and I think perhaps that this is the number one sore spot and cause of the numerous personnel incidents which are occurring in the Bureau, I really don't feel that my case is extraordinary except to the lengths which I pursued it. Most of the agents, when they get in a jam with the Bureau, are--well, they have this frustrated feeling that there's nothing they can do about it, so they quietly resign, and unfortunately the government service loses some of the finest and most capable personnel because of this. One of the sore spots, number one, is this voluntary overtime. Now, the Bureau will cite the agents performed so many hundred thousand hours of voluntary overtime over the course of the past year and this saved hiring other agents and effected tremendous economy in addition to showing a great spirit. Unfortunately, however, this voluntary overtime has a few strings attached to it which really don't make it voluntary. Number one, well, unless you maintain a certain average, they go by an office average, and unless you're above it most of the time you will be required to explain why not. Well, obviously if you are working on an average, some are going to be above and some below, and whether you're one minute above or one minute below doesn't really make any difference.

**THOMAS:** You mean that there is a standard set for overtime that an agent and other employees are supposed to put in?

**TURNER:** It doesn't apply to other employees. This only applies to special agents.

**THOMAS:** I see.

**TURNER:** There is no set standard that you're going to find written down, but the average in the field right now is about three hours a day in addition to a normal eight hour working day agents are on duty perhaps eleven hours a day on an average. Of course if you work a weekend why it means you could go home at five o'clock on Monday. This kind of thing.

**THOMPSON:** And yet, if your average, if the national average, or the office average is three hours and you've only worked --yourself worked two and a half, then that lets you in for trouble, is that your point?

TURNER: If it happens two or three months in a row why then you are called in to explain why you aren't carrying your share of the work load.

THOMPSON: Well, then what is the use of an average? Why don't they just say how many hours a day they want you to work overtime?

TURNER: Well, because the overtime is supposed to be caused by emergency conditions which arise on occasion. Obviously if a bank robbery happens at five o'clock on a Saturday or on a Friday afternoon this is an emergency condition and agents can very well expect to work through the night. However, the point is, that saying you have a month where no emergencies happen, and this occurs quite often--they come in bunches and then there won't be any--nevertheless, if the office average was say, three hours the previous month, these agents know full well that they're going to have put in approximately that amount of time whether there's any emergency or not, or else they're going to be below the office average and called on the carpet for it. Now when you consider that not only could they be called on the carpet for it, but that their raises are contingent upon them being above this office average. I think that this is one of the things that are commented on when an agent is considered for promotion--how much he has been above the office average.

THOMPSON: Oh, but, I--I'm not much of a mathematician, but how can you be above the average, because if everybody is above the average then the average gets higher.

TURNER: Right.

THOMPSON: I mean, this seems to me--it could go up to twenty-four hours a day--

TURNER: You've put your finger on what I call the number one sore spot. It's been spiraling ever since it started and it's now up to three hours a day, and if you figure that out, on a five day work week, that's twenty-four (sic) extra hours a week.

THOMPSON: Are you paid for this?

TURNER: You're paid a fringe benefit for an hour and twelve minutes of it, or something like that, which Mr. Levine brought out in his comments--the public law that was enacted a number of years ago on that.

THOMAS: And you say that this kind of a situation is one of the major sore spots within the Bureau, then, with regard to morale and attitude?

TURNER: Oh, definitely. These agents--they have no reluctance to do the job when it's there to be done, but they definitely do not like to be hanging around putting in time. They'd rather be with their families when there's nothing specific to be done.

THOMPSON: Do the agents resent the supervision of their private lives which was spoken about in the other interview, such as investigation of wives and families and things of that sort?

TURNER: Well, I don't think that's a major issue with them at all. It may be in a case or two, but that isn't the problem. Getting back to this overtime thing, as you say, it's more or less been a pyramiding thing over the years. It just goes up and up. I don't know where it will end as long as they use that as a criterion for performance. As an example, say that two agents each have the same number of cases assigned involving the same amount of work, saying its done in a reasonably efficient manner. The only thing that's going to distinguish between them as to their performance and who gets a raise and who doesn't, perhaps, is who took the longer time to do the job, because his overtime will be higher, and under this concept they are putting a premium on inefficiency. He will be considered superior in attitude and everything because he's put in more overtime.

THOMPSON: It's taken him longer to do it.

TURNER: Yeah, because it took him longer to do it.

THOMAS: Now along these same lines, Mr. Levine said that when an agent was considered for--as a candidate for promotion, another factor that weighed very heavily was whether or not he had written sufficient numbers to the Bureau, or to Mr. Hoover, laudatory letters. How does this check out with your experience?

TURNER: Well, long ago when I was a newer agent, it was intimated to me that this was a very desirable thing to do when you received a raise to send a letter to Mr. Hoover thanking him, this kind of thing, and that it was considered de rigueur to request his autographed photograph, this kind of thing, but I haven't had quite the extent of it that apparently Mr. Levine has, but then again he was closer to Washington.

THOMAS: But of course, it may be common practice for employees of a company or an agency or whatever, if they receive a raise or get a promotion to write a letter back to whoever is responsible, so it seems to me that this --I don't find anything that is significant in this. The significant question would be, "What if someone did not do this." Was there anything that followed from it?

TURNER: Well, I can't answer that absolutely. I just don't know, because I'm not the one that would make decisions as to raises and all.

THOMAS: No, but I meant in your acquaintance--

TURNER: I think that it's fairly well accepted among the agents that the more buttering up you do in that nature the better off you are, but then again, this isn't necessarily distinctive of the FBI.

THOMAS: I have one question that I'd like to get back to here, and that is your experience with relation to the Congressman that you had contacted. Now you mentioned the reaction of one Congressman was sort of throwing up his hands, and I wondered whether in the ones that you had talked to this was confirmed. Do they consider the FBI to be a thing completely apart from their jurisdiction?

TURNER: Well, of course, if they contended that they'd be wrong. No, they don't.

THOMAS: All right. What did they tell you?

TURNER: Do you want to get down to cases on it or generalize?

THOMAS: I'd like to, if you can, be specific.

TURNER: Well, as far as Senator Kefauver's office felt that it was just too big a thing to buck. In other words, he'd had good relations with Mr. Hoover and he apparently wanted to keep it that way. Congressman Sells' office: I wrote to Congressman Sells because he was chairman of the House Judiciary Committee, and as such, the context of my letter was what I found in this while I was still an agent, that I had no forum in which to be heard impartially concerning a grievance which --actually the way that--the injustice that was done, I felt, had impaired my reputation to the extent that I was always a fellow that worked hard and did a job and here these statements were made concerning this which I felt were completely unjustified and I wanted an impartial investigation into it--not by the Bureau, but by either the attorney general or some member of Congress, or some impartial hearing where I could present my case, and incidentally the case of another agent who had been dealt with severely because he was a few pounds over an arbitrary weight limit. This is another source of ---

THOMAS: This is the man who subsequently testified-- -

TURNER: He subsequently testified in my behalf, yes.

THOMAS: And what happened to him?

TURNER: Well, he was transferred to Alaska and the last I heard they suspended him, something about an applicant case and when he didn't report back after the suspension was up, I understand that they either are in the process of or have already given him a medical discharge for nervousness. Now, obviously they didn't want another hearing. This is the conclusion I draw from anything like that. The man isn't sick.

THOMPSON: Well, even on paper is there no provision for grievance hearings or discussion of the possible disciplinary moves, you know, is there no--even internally --what you've described is a large government department functioning in fact outside of any other routine, in other words an empire unto itself which, on paper is responsible to the Congress but that the Congress is not implementing that at all.

TURNER: Right. The normal checks and balances which control the activities of other agencies--and I'm not talking about supersecret information which obviously must remain just in the possession of the FBI--I'm talking about their internal administration, their administrative policies, their handling of personnel to best advantage, you know. Every other agency, for instance CIA has a watchdog committee which will jump all over it, they get off base in this regard, but it seems

that the FBI the normal system of checks and balances has broken down completely.

THOMPSON: And no even internal set-up within the FBI

TURNER: Yeah, but there again, You criticise any of their policies and you're just bluntly told you're wrong and that's it, period. There's no recourse from that within the FBI. They have the supposed channel of grievance, which I followed, by the way, but it was strictly to no satisfaction.

THOMAS: Mr. Turner, I'd like your opinion on this. It seems to me that in some ways the FBI is a kind of paramilitary organization with a lot of strict requirements of men that go into the department that they have to--they know that they are going into an organization which demands a great deal of them, and I'm wondering if, in fact, the nature of the operation does not require the suspension of certain civil rights that ordinarily you would simply not want to give up. Now, I just thought of that question and I wondered, is there anything in this at all?

TURNER: Yes, I agree that the very nature of the work in which the FBI engages demands that there be, oh, a stern regiment, as the Bureau puts it. However, I think, as I mentioned before, that a lot of times the stern regiment is far exceeded, that there's nothing to be served by the lengths or extremes to which they go. I think that a reasonable stern discipline is very desirable, but I don't think the unreasonable lengths to which they go necessarily promote either the efficiency of the service or actually promote anything which is desirable. I think it, for example, when I was writing, one of the gentlemen with whom I communicated was Senator Javits of New York and Senator Javits wrote Robert Kennedy, the attorney general, stating that he felt that each and every government organization in dealing with its employees must abide by the basic concepts of fair play.

I don't think that there's any relation between fair play and the need for discipline. I think that they are two different things and that the Bureau could have this discipline and still have fair play.

THOMAS: There's no conflict, you mean, between these two concepts.

TURNER: Right. Yes, yes, exactly. Now, the Bureau sent an assistant director over to see the Senator, and, as I get the story from one of the Senator's aides, this assistant director said, well, we'll handle it, it's merely an internal administrative matter for the Bureau. And Senator Javits reportedly replied, "Well, I was in the military service, and both of my assistants were in the military service and we know the need for discipline, but," he said, "however, feel that this has exceeded any such need." So this is the point that I make. Definitely, discipline is required, but as the Bureau interprets it they have gone way overboard on it. These are intelligent people, understand, hired, supposedly the cream of the crop, and they require a certain amount of regimen. Any organization does, especially when they are in law enforcement work, but this has gone so far in excess that it's lowered the morale terribly.

THOMAS: You have written a book now, which I understand you have offered to



publishers and the title of that book is, "The FBI, The Hoover Myth." And I wonder if you have anything that you would like to add to what we have already discussed vis-a-vis Mr. Hoover himself. Obviously the whole conversation has revolved around him, but I wondered if you had anything further to say on this.

TURNER: I might explain this--the title might --I actually in a letter to Senator Kefauver of Tennessee (I was stationed in Knoxville, Tennessee at the time and I thought I was at least in some manner a constituent of his) I made the statement, and I'll tell you in a minute to what I referred when I said as an example that any statement which isn't in furtherance of the Hoover myth is therefore labeled by the FBI as an unfounded allegation. Well, as I explained, what I meant by this myth is this presentation of absolute perfection and no admission of ever being wrong, always presenting itself as something infallible. I think that, speaking for myself and the agents I know, they'd much rather have the thing put on an objective level rather than all this, well, there's one fellow that put it to me, he said, "That organization is just too good to be true," and it really is too good to be true. It isn't true.

THOMAS: Does this have to do with the strong public image that one newspaper has said one of the reasons that they would not take up the story that Mr. Levine had offered to us was that they couldn't cope with Mr. Hoover's strong public image?

TURNER: Yes, you find that in just about any--I don't think it's--as I said, it's not distinctive to the newspaper people at all. I pointed out Congress has the same feeling.. I think in many places that you go you'd get the same reaction. I did mention that I wanted to cite an example---

THOMAS: That you started--that's right.

TURNER: This again is all in this--on the record. When I was in Oklahoma City I think that--a problem arose. In other words, I requested a transfer from Oklahoma City and the request was for consideration. It required a simple "yes" or "no" answer and I didn't expect any more. What I got was a statement that, since I requested the transfer from Oklahoma, I was unenthusiastic for my assignment there. Because I was unenthusiastic, I had a poor attitude and that therefore I was being placed on indefinite probation. Well this is what I mean by this excess to which this regimen is carried. Sure, I wasn't in a position to dictate where I should be stationed, nor was I even trying. I pointed out, however, that in a large organization, perhaps it isn't always apparent that my background wasn't being used down there. Perhaps it could have been used to better advantage elsewhere. Now, when I was placed on probation, this started this personal grievance which culminated in my corresponding with Congress. One of the statements that I made in the letter to Kefauver, going back to that again for a moment--it's difficult to put across some of this to people outside the Bureau. They just sometimes don't believe it. And, I cited as an example a gentleman in Chicago by the name of Richard Ogilvie. Now Richard Ogilvie was, if you'll go back to the year 1957, at that time there was what is referred to as the Appalachian gang which convened at Appalachia, New York and which consisted of some of the top hoodlums of organized crime in the country. Well, the attorney general at the time was very upset

that such a conclave could go on, of people of this stature in the world of crime. And he organized a special task force to investigate and prosecute these people. It was known as the Attorney General's Special Group on Organized Crime. Mr. Ogilvie was head of their Chicago operations.

THOMAS: This is the U.S.---

TURNER: This is the Department of Justice. As you know, organized crime and Chicago were fairly synonymous terms around the law enforcement. This group was later disbanded. They had performed their function. The group had been prosecuted and therefore their reason for being no longer existed. However, Mr. Ogilvie made the statement to the Chicago press, radio and television that his group--now understand he's an employee of the Department of Justice at the time and therefore actually within the same Department as the FBI. His group had not been afforded what he considered sufficient cooperation by the FBI and he also considered that the FBI was outmoded in their operations. Well now these are his opinions and it was not my purpose to either concur with Mr. Ogilvie and his version of the FBI, but what happened was that the FBI thereupon labeled Mr. Ogilvie, in a memorandum to all agents that he had made unfounded allegations. Just arbitrarily, like that, notwithstanding the fact that they were merely expressions of opinion.

THOMAS: They were not, in this memorandum I assume, refuted in any way, merely dismissed with the label "unfounded allegation."

TURNER: Right. Exactly. This to me was a rather arbitrary way of--just because he had been critical of the Bureau, of dismissing him as having made unfounded allegations, and inasmuch as this is the same thing that I had been accused of in Oklahoma City, that I had made "unfounded allegations," I point that out--how arbitrary this particular label was attached to people.

THOMPSON: In other words you used the Ogilvie story as an example in approaching Senator Kefauver?

TURNER: Yes, right, as an example of how arbitrary some of these Bureau statements can get. So, I think that I wanted to bring that out because it illustrates a little about what I'm talking about, this arbitrary attitude, and it also--one of the allegations against me when the Bureau dismissed me was that in making this statement to Senator Kefauver I was therefore aligning myself with an enemy of the Bureau, namely, Mr. Ogilvie. That's pretty strong language, just because the man was critical of the cooperation he got from the Bureau why he was labeled an enemy of the Bureau.

THOMAS: By whom, now ---

TURNER: By the Bureau representative.

THOMPSON: In the allegation against him---

TURNER: Right. This is on record in the Civil Service here.

THOMAS: I see.

THOMPSON: That you had aligned yourself with an enemy.

TURNER: Yeah. All I was saying was that a man had the right to express an opinion. I was in no way agreeing with him or disagreeing with him. I merely thought that he should have the right to express it without being hit in the face with an "unfounded allegations" label.

ANNOUNCER: You have just heard an interview with William W. Turner, former special agent with the FBI, whose suit against the Bureau was filed in the United States District Court in Washington, D.C. on October 5, 1962. The interview was conducted by Trevor Thomas and Elsa Knight Thompson for Pacifica Radio.

Tape running time 84 minutes

first scheduling: Eleventh Hour  
at KPFA October 26, 1962